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(54) **METHODS FOR FORMING AN
INTERCONNECT PATTERN ON A
SUBSTRATE**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**

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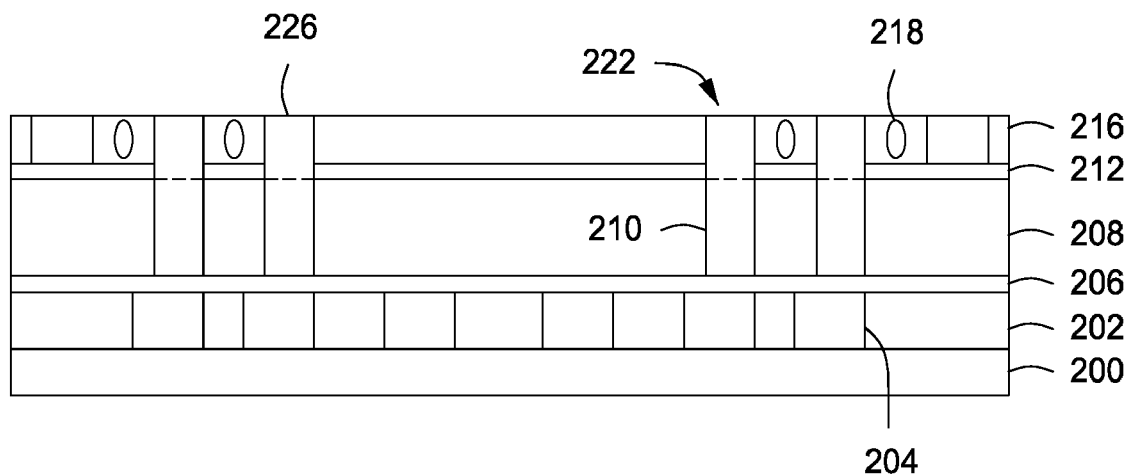
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Embodiments of methods for forming interconnect patterns on a substrate are provided herein. In some embodiments, a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate includes depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate; removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer; removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

18 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



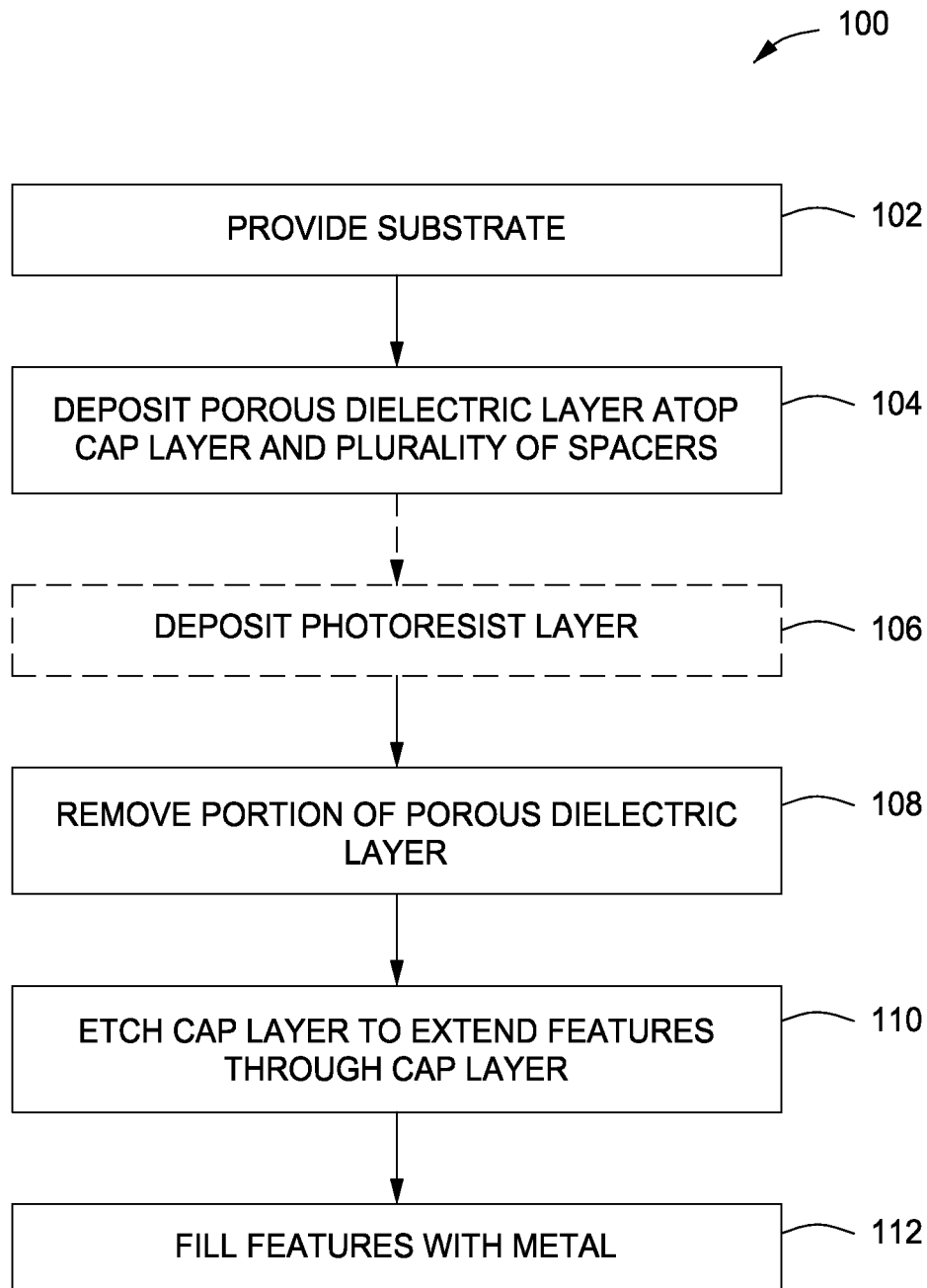
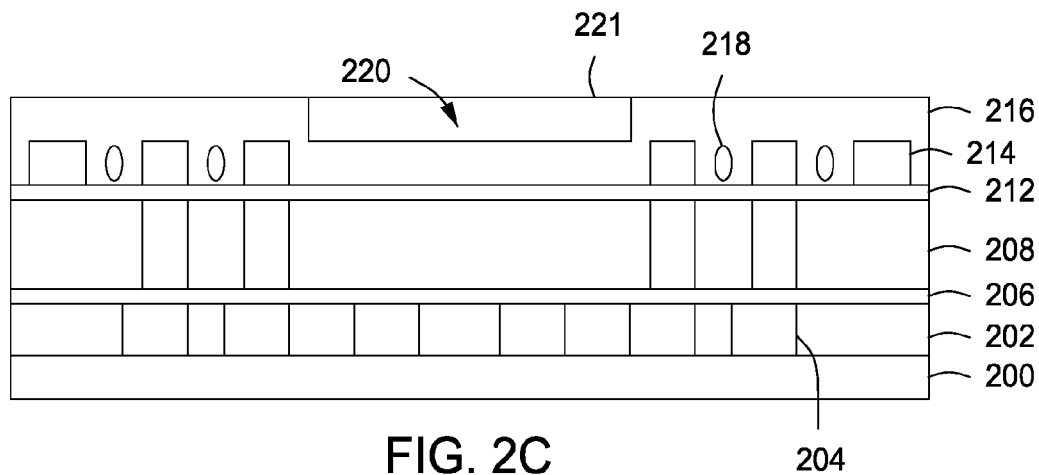
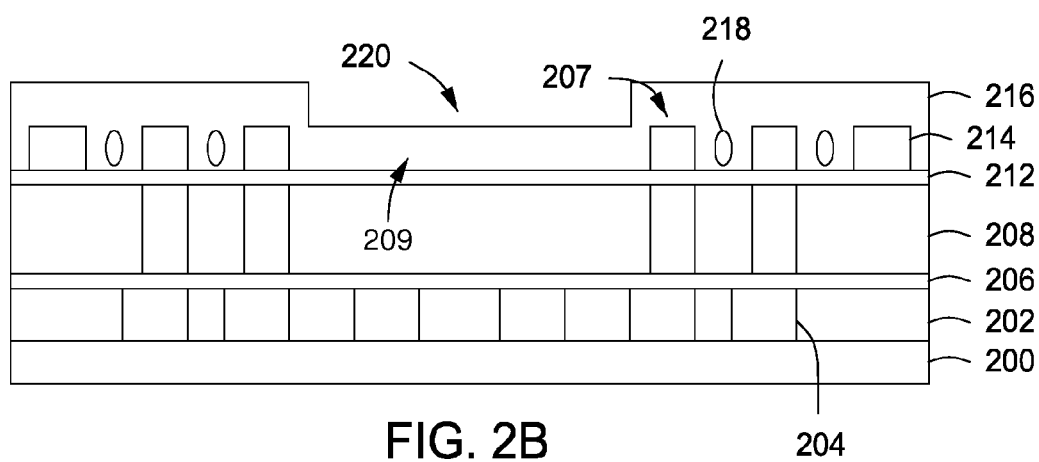
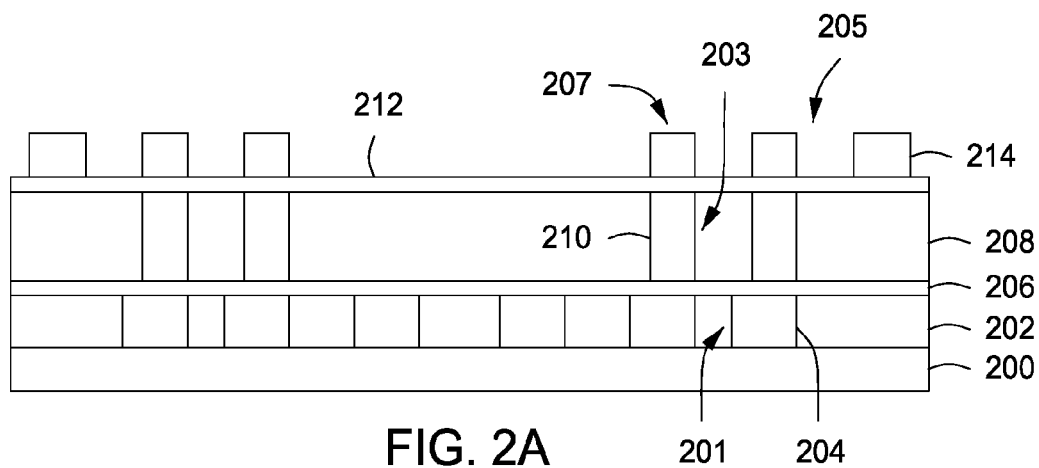
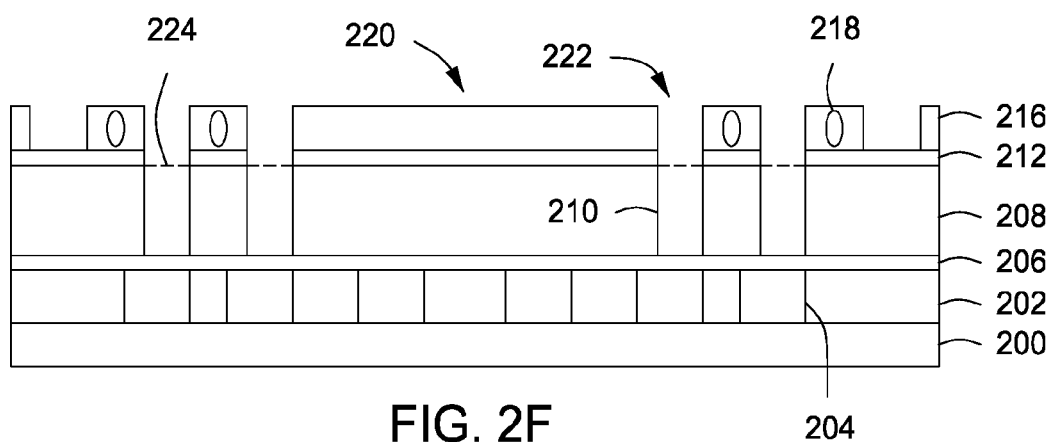
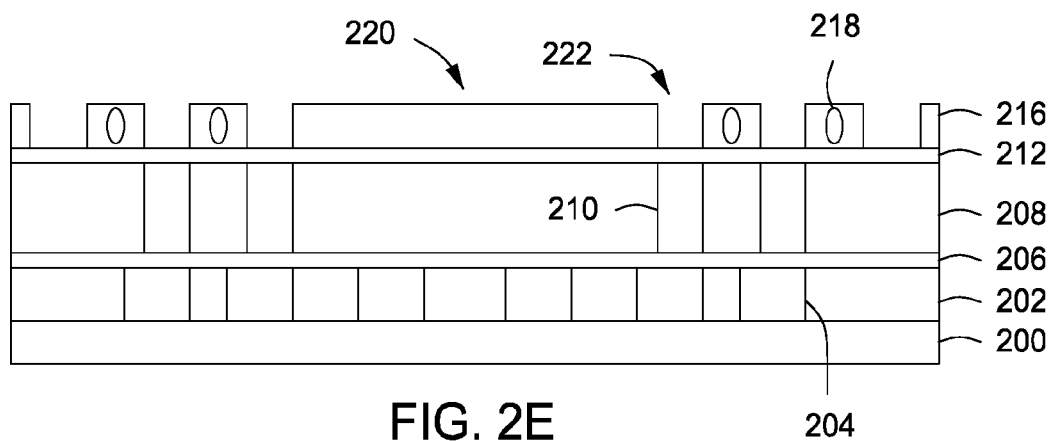
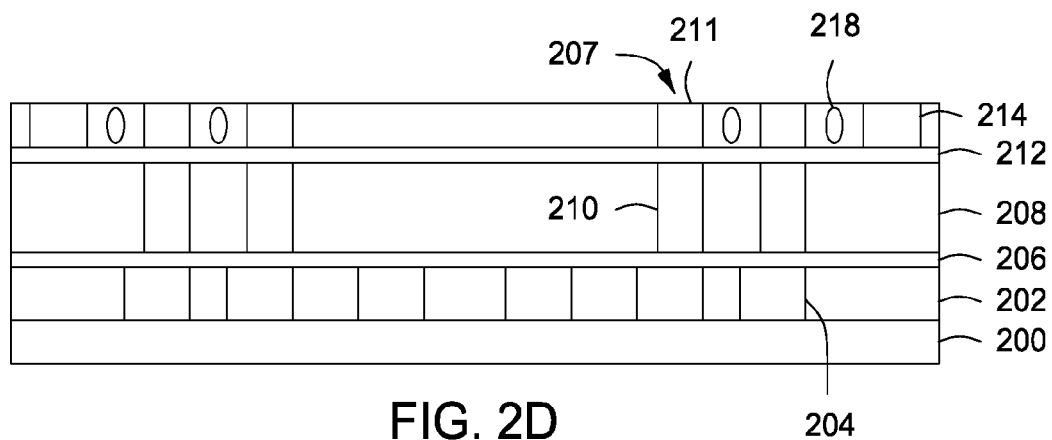


FIG. 1





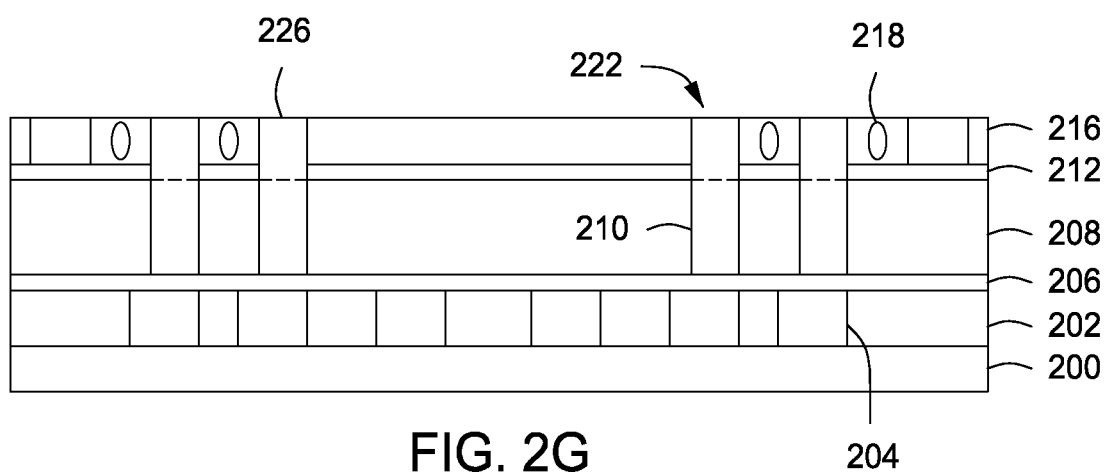


FIG. 2G

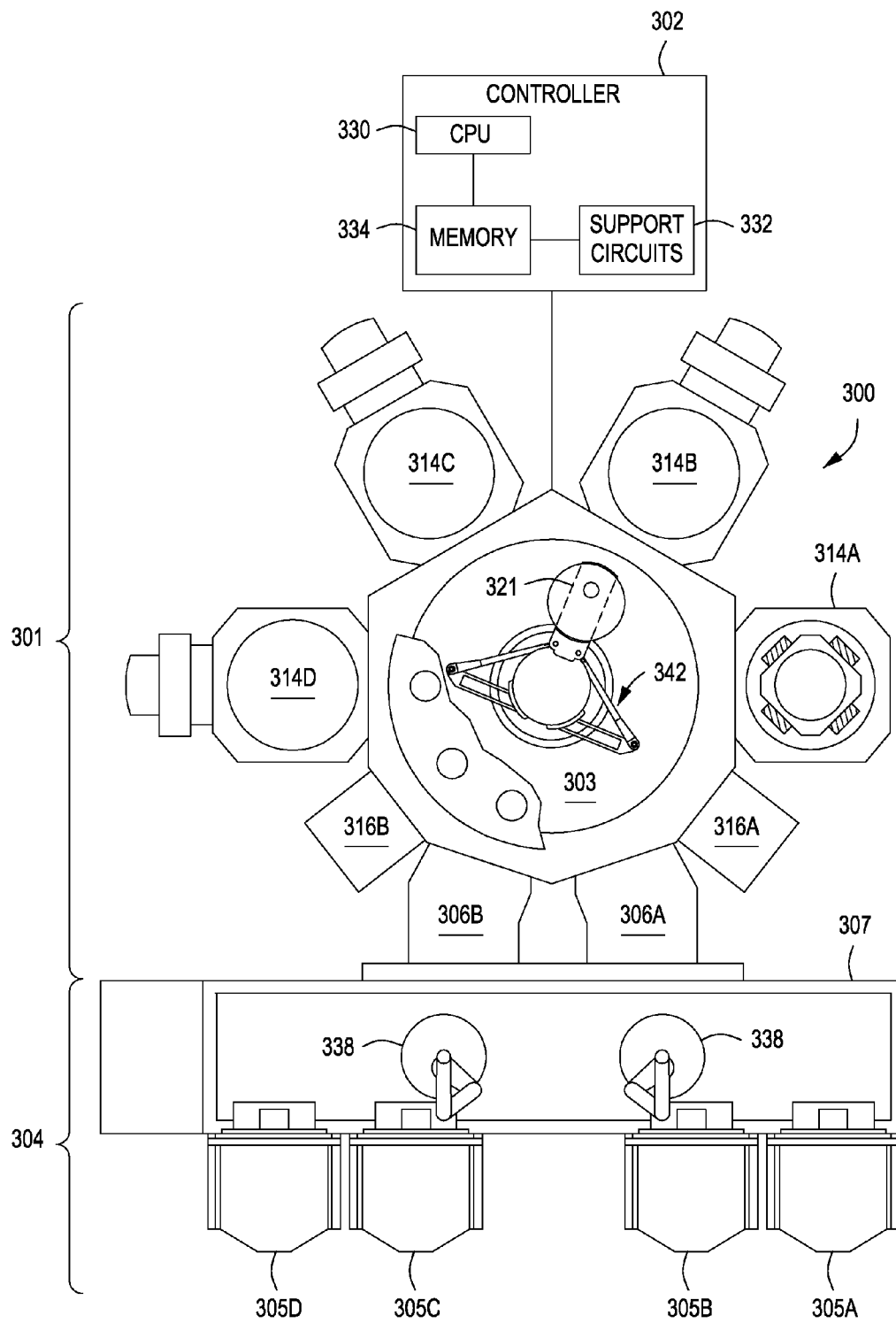


FIG. 3

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METHODS FOR FORMING AN INTERCONNECT PATTERN ON A SUBSTRATE

FIELD

Embodiments of the present disclosure generally relate to semiconductor fabrication processes.

BACKGROUND

Conventional processes used to form interconnect structures typically include a number of cycles of deposition of a patterning template (e.g., photoresist, hard mask, liner, or the like) followed by one or more etch processes. For example, a conventional process may include deposition of a masking layer followed by multiple etch processes to create features (e.g., trenches and vias) in an underlying layer disposed atop a substrate (e.g., a dielectric layer) to form an interconnect pattern. However, the inventors have observed that performing multiple etch processes may result in an uneven and non-uniform profile of the features in the interconnect pattern. In addition, the inventors have observed that the multiple etch processes may cause a degradation in the structural integrity of the features, undesirably resulting in a collapsing of the features during subsequent deposition processes (e.g., a metal fill).

Therefore, the inventors have provided an improved method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate.

SUMMARY

Embodiments of methods for forming interconnect patterns on a substrate are provided herein. In some embodiments, a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate includes depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate; removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer; removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

In some embodiments, a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate includes: depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer such that one or more voids are formed within the porous dielectric layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate; selectively depositing a photoresist layer atop the porous dielectric layer atop an area of the porous dielectric layer where no features are to be formed in the porous dielectric layer; removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer through the photoresist layer; removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

In some embodiments, a computer readable medium, having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate to be performed, wherein the method includes depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate; removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer; removing the plurality

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of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

Other and further embodiments of the present disclosure are described below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the present disclosure, briefly summarized above and discussed in greater detail below, can be understood by reference to the illustrative embodiments of the disclosure depicted in the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only typical embodiments of this disclosure and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope, for the disclosure may admit to other equally effective embodiments.

FIG. 1 shows a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate in accordance with at least some embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIGS. 2A-G depict a portion of a substrate in various stages of a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate in accordance with at least some embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 3 depicts an integrated tool suitable for performing a method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate in accordance with at least some embodiments of the present disclosure.

To facilitate understanding, identical reference numerals have been used, where possible, to designate identical elements that are common to the figures. The figures are not drawn to scale and may be simplified for clarity. It is contemplated that elements and features of one embodiment may be beneficially incorporated in other embodiments without further recitation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments of methods for forming interconnect patterns on a substrate are provided herein. In at least some embodiments, the inventive method may advantageously facilitate the formation of features within a porous dielectric layer while not causing damage to the porous dielectric layer that would result from conventionally utilized feature formation techniques, for example such as one or more etch processes.

FIG. 1 depicts a method for forming an interconnect pattern on a substrate in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure. FIGS. 2A-2F depict a portion of a substrate through various stages of the method of FIG. 1 in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

The method **100** generally begins at **102**, where a substrate **200** is provided to a process chamber. The process chamber may be any type of process chamber suitable to perform at least a portion of the method described herein, for example, one or more of the process chambers described below. In some embodiments, more than one process chamber may be utilized to perform separate portions of the method. In such embodiments, the process chambers may be standalone process chambers or part of an integrated tool (e.g., a cluster tool), for example, such as the integrated tool shown in FIG. 3.

The substrate may be any type of substrate suitable for semiconductor device fabrication. For example, referring to FIG. 2, the substrate **200** may be a silicon substrate, for example crystalline silicon (e.g., Si<100> or Si<111>), silicon oxide, strained silicon, doped or undoped polysili-

con, or the like, a III-V or II-VI compound substrate, a silicon germanium (SiGe) substrate, an epi-substrate, a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) substrate, a display substrate such as a liquid crystal display (LCD), a plasma display, an electro luminescence (EL) lamp display, a solar array, solar panel, a light emitting diode (LED) substrate, a semiconductor wafer, or the like.

In some embodiments, the substrate **200** includes a partially or fully fabricated semiconductor device, for example such as a two dimensional or three dimensional device, such as a multigate device, fin field effect transistor (FinFET), metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistor (MOSFET), nanowire field effect transistor (NWFET), tri-gate transistor, a memory device such as a NAND device or NOR device, or the like.

In some embodiments, one or more layers are disposed atop the substrate **200**. The one or more layers may be any type of layers suitable to facilitate the fabrication of at least a portion of a desired device (e.g., an interconnect structure). For example, in some embodiments, a low-k dielectric layer **202** may be disposed atop the substrate **200**, such as shown in FIG. 2A. The low-k dielectric layer **202** may include any low-k dielectric material suitable for semiconductor device fabrication. For example, in some embodiments, the low-k dielectric layer **202** may comprise a silicon containing material, for example, such as silicon oxide (SiO₂), a carbon or fluorine doped silicon oxide (SiO₂), or the like.

In some embodiments, a conductive layer **204** is disposed within features (second features) **201** formed in the low-k dielectric layer **202** and disposed atop the substrate **200**. The conductive layer **204** may include any conductive material suitable to provide sufficient conductivity between the substrate **200** and one or more features of an at least partially fabricated device (e.g., the interconnect structures described herein). For example, in some embodiments, the conductive layer **204** may comprise aluminum (Al), cobalt (Co), copper (Cu) and copper alloys such as with manganese (Mn) and/or tin (Sn), ruthenium (Ru), silver (Ag), tantalum (Ta), tantalum nitride (TaN), titanium (Ti), titanium nitride (TiN), tungsten (W), or the like.

As used herein, when describing the dielectric layers (e.g., the low-k dielectric layer **202**, barrier layer **206** and bulk dielectric layer **208**) a high-k value may be greater than about 4, a low-k value may be less than about 3.9 (for example, about 2.5 to about 3.5), and an ultra low-k dielectric may be less than about 2.5.

In some embodiments, a barrier layer **206** is disposed atop the low-k dielectric layer **202** and the conductive layer **204** (when present). The barrier layer **206** may be formed from any fabrication compatible material sufficient to form a barrier between the low-k dielectric layer **202** and layers disposed above the low-k dielectric layer **202** (e.g., the bulk dielectric layer **208** described below). For example, in some embodiments, the barrier layer **206** comprises a low-k dielectric material (e.g., a barrier low-k (BLoK) layer), for example, a silicon containing material, for example, such as silicon oxide (SiO₂), a carbon or fluorine doped silicon oxide (SiO₂), or the like.

In some embodiments, a bulk dielectric layer **208** is disposed atop the barrier layer **206**. The bulk dielectric layer **208** may be formed from any fabrication compatible material, for example, a low-k dielectric material such as silicon oxide (SiO₂), silicon oxynitride (SiON), or the like. In some embodiments, the porosity of the bulk dielectric layer **208** may be varied to reduce the dielectric properties of the bulk dielectric layer **208**. For example, in some embodiments, the bulk dielectric layer **208** may have a porous structure, such

as a closed porous structure, providing in a film having a dielectric constant of about 1.7 to about 2.5.

In some embodiments, a gap fill material **210** may be disposed in features (third features) **203** formed in the bulk dielectric layer **208** to define one or more vias to be fabricated in the bulk dielectric layer **208**. For example, in some embodiments, the gap fill material **210** comprises a dielectric material, for silicon carbon nitride (SiCN), silicon nitride (SiN), silicon oxide (SiO₂), silicon oxynitride (SiON), amorphous carbon (C), or the like. In such embodiments, the gap fill material **210** may be selected such that the gap fill material **210** may be selectively etched with respect to the bulk dielectric layer **208** to facilitate etching the gap fill material **210** as described below.

In some embodiments, the gap fill material **210** comprises a metal, for example, tungsten (W), copper (Cu), or the like. In such embodiments, the inventors have observed that in applications where the features **203** formed in the bulk dielectric layer **208** are not aligned with features **205** defined by the spacers **207** (e.g., non-self aligned vias) providing a gap fill material **210** that comprises a metal eliminates a need for additional etch and/or deposition processes to form the interconnect structures as described herein. In some embodiments, the gap fill material **210** comprises an amorphous carbon (C). In some embodiments, the composition of the gap fill material **210** may be selected to provide a desired etch selectivity between the gap fill material **210** and the bulk dielectric layer **208** and/or the barrier layer **206** during one or more etch processes, as described below.

In some embodiments, a cap layer **212** is disposed atop the bulk dielectric layer **208**. The cap layer **212** may be formed from any fabrication compatible material, for example, a low-k dielectric material such as silicon oxide (SiO₂), silicon oxynitride (SiON), silicon oxycarbide (SiOC), or the like. In some embodiments, the composition of the cap layer **212** may be selected to provide a desired etch selectivity between the cap layer **212** and one or more layers disposed atop the (e.g., a porous dielectric layer **216** and/or patterning layer **214** described below) during one or more etch processes, as described below.

In some embodiments, a patterning layer **214** comprising a plurality of spacers **207** that define one or more features **205** may be disposed atop the cap layer **212**. The patterning layer **214** may be any fabrication compatible material suitable to provide a template to form one or more features, for example, such as described below. For example, in some embodiments, the patterning layer **214** may comprise amorphous carbon (C). Patterning layer **214** may be formed by single lithographic pattern transfer or by double printing. In some embodiments, an in situ process control/feedforward of one or more deposited film layers, such as each of the deposited film layers (including etching the deposited layers), may be provided to control critical dimensions (CD) and height and to adjust the next process accordingly. In some embodiments, feedback may also be provided to correct for variations in the CD and height if out of control (e.g., outside of a desired tolerance).

Next, at **104**, a porous dielectric layer **216** may be deposited atop the plurality of spacers **207** and the cap layer **212**, such as shown in FIG. 2B. The porous dielectric layer **216** may be deposited via any deposition process suitable to deposit the porous dielectric layer **216** for example, such as atomic layer deposition (ALD), chemical vapor deposition (CVD), plasma enhanced CVD (PECVD), spin on coating, or the like, followed by an ultra-violet (UV) or electron beam exposure to cure the deposited film.

The porous dielectric layer **216** may be deposited to any thickness sufficient to cover the plurality of spacers **207**. In some embodiments, the porous dielectric layer **216** may be deposited such that the porous dielectric layer **216** has a uniform thickness, or in some embodiments, a varying thickness across the porous dielectric layer **216**. In some embodiments, the deposition of the porous dielectric layer **216** may result in, for example, one or more depressions **220** formed in the porous dielectric layer **216** that are disposed above an area **209** where no features are to be formed in the underlying layers (e.g., the barrier layer **206**, bulk dielectric layer **208**, cap layer **212**, or the like).

The porous dielectric layer **216** may comprise any materials having a sufficiently low dielectric constant to provide a desired capacitance across a finished device. For example, in some embodiments, the porous dielectric layer **216** may be a low-k or ultralow-k dielectric layer comprising, for example, silicon oxycarbide (SiOC). In some embodiments, the porosity of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be varied to reduce the dielectric properties of the porous dielectric layer **216**. For example, in some embodiments, the porous dielectric layer **216** may have a porous structure, such as a closed porous structure, providing in a film having a dielectric constant of about 1.7 to about 2.5.

The inventors have observed that in some applications, a sufficiently low dielectric constant may not be achieved for conventional materials that may be utilized to form the porous dielectric layer **216** by varying the porosity of the material. Moreover, the inventors have further observed that as porosity of the porous dielectric layer **216** increases, the structural integrity of the porous dielectric layer **216** decreases, which could result in a collapse of the porous dielectric layer **216** during subsequent deposition processes (e.g., a metal fill such as described below). As such, in some embodiments, the one or more voids **218** may be formed in the porous dielectric layer **216** during deposition of the porous dielectric layer **216**. The inventors have observed that by forming the one or more voids **218** in the porous dielectric layer **216**, the dielectric constant of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be reduced. In addition, the one or more voids **218** may facilitate decreasing the dielectric constant of the porous dielectric layer **216** while not significantly decreasing the structural integrity of the porous dielectric layer **216**.

The one or more voids **218** may be of any shape suitable to lower the dielectric constant to a desired magnitude, while providing sufficient structural stability to the porous dielectric layer **216**. For example, in some embodiments, the one or more voids **218** may have a cross sectional shape that is an irregular shape, or a regular shape, such as circle, oval, square, keyhole, or the like. The one or more voids **218** may be formed via any process suitable to create the one or more voids **218** while forming the porous dielectric layer **216**. For example, in some embodiments, the one or more voids **218** may be formed by varying the deposition rate of the porous dielectric layer **216** and/or by controlling the amount of overhang during the deposition of the porous dielectric layer **216**. Alternatively, or in combination with, in some embodiments, the one or more voids **218** may be formed by performing a series of alternating etch and deposition processes. For example, a portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be deposited, followed by a deposition of an oxide layer (e.g., silicon oxide, aluminum oxide, or the like). The oxide layer may then be etched away and an additional portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be subse-

quently deposited. This process may repeat as many times as desired to form the porous dielectric layer **216** having the one or more voids **218**.

In some embodiments, next, at **106**, a photoresist layer **221** may be optionally deposited atop the porous dielectric layer **216**, such as shown in FIG. **2E**. In such embodiments, the photoresist layer **221** is deposited within the one or more depressions **220** formed in the porous dielectric layer **216**. By depositing the photoresist layer **221** in the one or more depressions **220**, overetching, and therefore, damage to the underlying layers, may be prevented in subsequent etch processes, for example such as the etch process described below.

The photoresist layer **221** may comprise any suitable photoresist, such as a positive or negative photoresist that may be formed and patterned in any suitable manner, for example, via optical lithography techniques using light such as i-line (e.g., about 365 nm wavelength), g-line (e.g., about 436 nm wavelength), ultraviolet (UV), deep ultraviolet (DUV) or extreme ultraviolet (EUV), contact printing techniques, or the like. In some embodiments, the composition of the photoresist layer **221** may be selected such that the photoresist layer **221** and the porous dielectric layer **216** may be etched or removed at a substantially equivalent rate during a subsequent removal process (e.g., such as described below at **108**).

Next, at **108**, a portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be removed, such as shown in FIG. **2D**. By removing the portion of the porous dielectric layer **216**, a top **211** of the spacers **207** is exposed, advantageously allowing the spacers **207** to be removed in a subsequent etch process (e.g., the etch process as described below). In embodiments where a photoresist layer (e.g., photoresist layer **221**) is deposited atop the porous dielectric layer **216** (e.g., such as described above at **106**), the photoresist layer may be removed simultaneously with the portion of the porous dielectric layer **216**.

The portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** may be removed via any process that is suitable to remove the desired portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** (and photoresist layer, when present) and which may be dependent on the composition of the porous dielectric layer **216** and/or the photoresist layer **221**. For example, in some embodiments, the desired portion of the porous dielectric layer **216** and optional photoresist layer **221** may be removed via, for example, a chemical mechanical planarization (CMP) process, an etch process, a combination thereof or the like.

Next, at **110**, the spacers **207** are removed to form features **222** in the porous dielectric layer **216**. The spacers **207** may be removed via any process suitable to remove the spacers **207** while not increasing a width of the size of the features **222**, for example, such as a wet or dry etch, or by exposing the spacers to a hydrogen containing vapor (e.g., hydrogen (H_2), water (H_2O), or the like). For example, in some embodiments, an etch process may be performed that selectively etches the spacers **207** while not etching any portion of the porous dielectric layer **216**.

The inventors have observed that conventional processes utilized to form features in some applications (e.g., the formation of an interconnect pattern) typically include a series of deposition and etch steps. For example, a patterned masking layer may be deposited atop a dielectric layer (e.g., the porous dielectric layer **216**) to define one or more features. The dielectric layer may then be etched through the patterned masking layer to form the features within the dielectric layer. This process may be repeated a number of

times to form a desired number of features. However, the inventors have observed that, etching the dielectric layer causes damage to the dielectric layer, resulting in a poor (e.g., uneven) feature profile and non-uniform feature sizes. In addition, the damage to the dielectric layer caused by the etching may decrease the mechanical strength of the dielectric layer, resulting in a collapse of the features during subsequent processes, for example, such as a subsequent metal fill to fill the features. Thus, the inventors have observed that removing the spacers **207** advantageously facilitates forming the features **222** without etching the porous dielectric layer **216**, thus reducing or eliminating any damage to the porous dielectric layer **216** that would otherwise be caused by an etch process as described above. In addition, in some embodiments, the formation and subsequent removal of the spacers **207** may facilitate the formation of self-aligned vias (e.g., the extension of the features **222** to the barrier layer **206** as described below), advantageously eliminating the need for additional etch processes to form the via.

Next, at **112**, the cap layer **212** may be etched to extend the features **222** through the cap layer **212**, such as shown in FIG. 2F. Etching the cap layer **212**, exposes at least a portion of the gap fill material **210**, allowing a conductive material (e.g., a metal) to be deposited atop the gap fill material **210** in a subsequent metal fill process (e.g., a metal fill process such as described below). In some embodiments, for example, where the gap fill material **210** is a dielectric material, the etch may be performed to further etch the gap fill material **210** to extend the features **222** to the barrier layer **206** (such as shown in phantom at **224**). The cap layer **212** may be etched via any suitable etch process that selectively etches the cap layer **212** while not etching the porous dielectric layer **216**.

Next, at **114**, the features **222** may be filled with a metal **226**, such as shown in FIG. 2G. The inventors have observed that by filling the features **222** with the metal **226** after depositing the porous dielectric layer **216** and/or forming the one or more voids **218** in the porous dielectric layer **216** (e.g., a “metal last” process) reduces or eliminates degradation of the metal **226** that could otherwise be caused by depositing the porous dielectric layer **216** and/or forming the one or more voids **218** in the porous dielectric layer **216** subsequent to filling the features **222** with the metal **226**.

The metal may be any metal sufficient to provide a desired conductive path through the feature **222** to the substrate **200** via the conductive layer **204** disposed within the low-k dielectric layer **202**. For example, in some embodiments, the features **222** may be filled with a metal, for example, copper (Cu), tungsten (W), ruthenium (Ru), or the like. The features may be filled with the metal via any process suitable to deposit the desired metal, for example, a deposition process, such as physical vapor deposition (PVD), chemical vapor deposition (CVD), atomic layer deposition (ALD), or the like.

After the features **222** are filled at **114**, the method **100** generally ends and the substrate **200** may proceed for further processing. For example, in some embodiments, subsequent processes such as deposition, etch, annealing, or the like may be performed to fabricate a finished device.

The methods described herein may be performed in individual process chambers that may be provided in a standalone configuration or as part of a cluster tool, for example, an integrated tool **300** (i.e., cluster tool) described below with respect to FIG. 3. Examples of the integrated tool **300** include the CENTURA®, PRODUCER® and ENDURA® integrated tools, available from Applied Mate-

rials, Inc., of Santa Clara, Calif. It is contemplated that the methods described herein may be practiced using other cluster tools having suitable process chambers coupled thereto, or in other suitable process chambers. For example, it may be advantageous in some embodiments to perform the inventive methods discussed above in an integrated tool such that there are limited or no vacuum breaks between processing steps. For example, reduced vacuum breaks may limit or prevent contamination of the seed layer or other portions of the substrate.

The integrated tool **300** includes a vacuum-tight processing platform **301**, a factory interface **304**, and a controller **302**. The processing platform **301** comprises multiple processing chambers, such as **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** operatively coupled to a transfer chamber **303**. The factory interface **304** is operatively coupled to the transfer chamber **303** by one or more load lock chambers (two load lock chambers, such as **306A** and **306B** shown in FIG. 3).

In some embodiments, the factory interface **304** comprises at least one docking station **307**, at least one factory interface robot **338** to facilitate the transfer of the semiconductor substrates. The docking station **307** is configured to accept one or more front opening unified pod (FOUP). Four FOUPs, such as **305A**, **305B**, **305C**, and **305D** are shown in the embodiment of FIG. 3. The factory interface robot **338** is configured to transfer the substrates from the factory interface **304** to the processing platform **301** through the loadlock chambers, such as **306A** and **306B**. Each of the load lock chambers **306A** and **306B** have a first port coupled to the factory interface **304** and a second port coupled to the transfer chamber **303**. The load lock chamber **306A** and **306B** are coupled to a pressure control system (not shown) which pumps down and vents the load lock chambers **306A** and **306B** to facilitate passing the substrates between the vacuum environment of the transfer chamber **303** and the substantially ambient (e.g., atmospheric) environment of the factory interface **304**. The transfer chamber **303** has a vacuum robot **342** disposed in the transfer chamber **303**. The vacuum robot **342** is capable of transferring substrates **321** between the load lock chambers **306A** and **306B** and the processing chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D**.

In some embodiments, the processing chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D**, are coupled to the transfer chamber **303**. The processing chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** may include any process chambers suitable to perform all or portions of the method **100** described above. For example, the processing chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** may include one or more etch chambers, deposition chambers, annealing chambers, or the like. In some embodiments, the processing chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** may include one or more of a HART™, E-MAX®, DPS®, DPS II, or ENABLER® etch chamber also available from Applied Materials, Inc.

In some embodiments, one or more optional service chambers (shown as **316A** and **316B**) may be coupled to the transfer chamber **303**. The service chambers **316A** and **316B** may be configured to perform other substrate processes, such as degassing, orientation, substrate metrology, cool down and the like.

In some embodiments, one or more of the service chambers **316A**, **316B** may be configured to perform metrology for in-situ process control of each deposited film layer, including the etching of each deposited layer. In-situ process control may be performed following some or all of the process steps described above in method **100**. For example, a substrate **200** as depicted in FIG. 2A may be transferred to a service chamber **316A**, **316B** to measure the critical

dimension of features **205**; or following **104**, the substrate **200** as depicted in FIG. 2B may be transferred to a service chamber **316A**, **316B** to measure the thickness of the deposited porous dielectric layer **216**; or following **110** the substrate **200** as depicted in FIG. 2E may be transferred to a service chamber **316A**, **316B** to measure the critical dimension of the features **222**; or the like.

Metrology data may be provided to a controller to provide feed-forward and/or feedback control to adjust subsequent processes and/or to correct, for example, variations in the critical dimension and height of deposited layers. For example, the critical dimensions measurements of feature **205** may be used to produce control signals that are used at **104** to adjust the deposition of the porous dielectric layer as necessary. Alternatively or in combination, the critical dimensions measurements of feature **222** may be used at **114** to optimize the deposition of a metal **226** to fill the feature.

The controller **302** controls the operation of the tool **300** using a direct control of the process chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** or alternatively, by controlling the computers (or controllers) associated with the process chambers **314A**, **314B**, **314C**, and **314D** and the tool **300**. In operation, the controller **302** enables data collection and feedback from the respective chambers and systems to optimize performance of the tool **300**. The controller **302** generally includes a Central Processing Unit (CPU) **330**, a memory **334** (e.g., a computer readable medium), and a support circuit **332**. The CPU **330** may be one of any form of a general purpose computer processor that can be used in an industrial setting. The support circuit **332** is conventionally coupled to the CPU **330** and may comprise a cache, clock circuits, input/output subsystems, power supplies, and the like. Software routines, such as the methods described above may be stored in the memory **334** and, when executed by the CPU **330**, transform the CPU **330** into a specific purpose computer (controller) **302** to control the integrated tool **300** to perform the method **100** as described above. The software routines may also be stored and/or executed by a second controller (not shown) that is located remotely from the tool **300**.

Thus, methods for forming interconnect patterns atop a substrate have been provided herein. In at least some embodiments, the inventive method may advantageously facilitate the formation of features within a porous dielectric layer while not causing damage to the porous dielectric layer.

While the foregoing is directed to embodiments of the present disclosure, other and further embodiments of the disclosure may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate, comprising:
 - depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate;
 - selectively depositing a photoresist layer atop an area of the porous dielectric layer where no features are to be formed in the porous dielectric layer;
 - subsequently removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer;
 - removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and
 - etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - filling the features with a metal after etching the cap layer.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the substrate further comprises a barrier layer disposed beneath the bulk dielectric layer.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the substrate further comprises a dielectric layer disposed beneath the barrier layer, wherein the dielectric layer comprises second features formed in the dielectric layer that are filled with a conductive material.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the features formed in the porous dielectric layer are aligned with, and disposed above, the second features formed in the dielectric layer.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the bulk dielectric layer comprises third features formed in the bulk dielectric layer that are filled with a metal containing material, a silicon containing material or a carbon containing material.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein the method further comprises:
 - removing the silicon containing material from the bulk dielectric layer to extend the features through the bulk dielectric layer.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein depositing the porous dielectric layer comprises depositing the porous dielectric layer such that one or more voids are formed within the porous dielectric layer.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - removing the photoresist layer while removing the portion of the porous dielectric layer.
10. A method for forming an interconnect pattern atop a substrate, comprising:
 - depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer such that one or more voids are formed within the porous dielectric layer, wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate;
 - selectively depositing a photoresist layer atop the porous dielectric layer atop an area of the porous dielectric layer where no features are to be formed in the porous dielectric layer;
 - removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer through the photoresist layer;
 - removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and
 - etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the substrate further comprises a barrier layer disposed beneath the bulk dielectric layer, and a dielectric layer disposed beneath the barrier layer, wherein the dielectric layer comprises second features formed in the dielectric layer that are filled with a conductive material, and wherein the features formed in the porous dielectric layer are aligned with, and disposed above, the second features formed in the dielectric layer.
12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
 - filling the features with a metal after etching the cap layer.
13. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
 - removing the photoresist layer while removing the portion of the porous dielectric layer.
14. A computer readable medium, having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause a method for etching features into a substrate to be performed, the method comprising:
 - depositing a porous dielectric layer atop a cap layer and a plurality of spacers disposed atop the cap layer,

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wherein the cap layer is disposed atop a bulk dielectric layer and the bulk dielectric layer is disposed atop a substrate;
 selectively depositing a photoresist layer atop an area of the porous dielectric layer where no features are to be 5
 formed in the porous dielectric layer;
 subsequently removing a portion of the porous dielectric layer;
 removing the plurality of spacers to form features in the porous dielectric layer; and 10
 etching the cap layer to extend the features through the cap layer.

15. The computer readable medium of claim **14**, wherein the method further comprises:

filling the features with a metal after etching the cap layer. 15

16. The computer readable medium of claim **14**, wherein the bulk dielectric layer comprises third features formed in the bulk dielectric layer that are filled with a metal containing material, a silicon containing material or a carbon containing material, and wherein the method further comprises: 20

removing the silicon containing material from the bulk dielectric layer to extend the features through the bulk dielectric layer.

17. The computer readable medium of claim **14**, wherein 25
 the method further comprises depositing the porous dielectric layer such that one or more voids are formed within the porous dielectric layer.

18. The computer readable medium of claim **14**, wherein 30
 the method further comprises:

removing the photoresist layer while removing the portion of the porous dielectric layer.

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